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MODUK (FOR DACU)

ARMS CONTROL: US/SOVIET GENEVA NST TALKS

SUMMARY

1. SOME PROSPECT OF MOVEMENT WHEN THE GENEVA TALKS RESUME. THE FORMULA IN THE PRESIDENT'S JULY MESSAGE TO GORBACHEV - ASSUMING HE HOLDS TO IT, DESPITE CRITICISM FROM THE RIGHT - SHOWS CONVERGENCE OF US/SOVIET VIEWS ON THE OFFENSIVE/DEFENSIVE RELATIONSHIP. INTER-AGENCY WORK ON THE NEW OFFENSIVE SYSTEMS PROPOSALS HE PROMISED HAS PRODUCED A POSSIBLE REFINEMENT OF THE US START POSITION, MOVING SOME WAY TOWARDS THE 30 PER CENT REDUCTIONS VARIANT OF THE SOVIET PROPOSAL Tabled IN JUNE. OSD UNEASY ABOUT A CHANGE OF START POSITION: UK SUPPORT ON 9 SEPTEMBER MIGHT THEREFORE BE APPROPRIATE.

DETAIL

2. ALTHOUGH THE EARLY AUGUST TALKS IN MOSCOW WERE A NON-EVENT, AND HOPES FOR THE RETURN MATCH HERE ON 5/6 SEPTEMBER ARE NOT HIGH, THERE NOW IS AN AIR OF EXPECTANCY, ABOUT THE NEXT SESSION IN GENEVA, WHICH STARTS ON 18 SEPTEMBER, AND THE FEELING THAT IT MAY SEE SOME FAIRLY RAPID MOVEMENT, PERHAPS TO BE SIGNALLED FIRST AT THE SHULTZ/SHEVARDNADZE TALKS HERE ON 19/20 SEPTEMBER. IT IS STILL WIDELY ACKNOWLEDGED AMONG THE AGENCIES THAT THE SOVIET PROPOSALS OF LATE MAY/EARLY JUNE REPRESENTED A SIGNIFICANT STEP FORWARD, PERHAPS PRINCIPALLY BECAUSE THEY FORMALLY BURIED THE SOVIET DEMAND FOR A TOTAL BAN ON QUOTE SPACE-STRIKE WEAPONS UNQUOTE, AND THUS ON SDI. THE FIRST US RESPONSE, IE THE PRESIDENT'S JULY MESSAGE, MAY HAVE BEEN FAIRLY BROADBRUSH, BUT IT HAS SIGNIFICANTLY ALTERED THE DEBATE HERE IN TWO RESPECTS.

3. FIRST, THE PRESIDENT INDICATED THAT HE WOULD BE PREPARED TO BIND THE US NOT TO GO FOR SDI DEPLOYMENT FOR AT LEAST SEVEN AND A HALF YEARS. GIVEN THAT THE RUSSIANS ON 29 MAY HAD SUGGESTED THE EXTENSION OF THE ABMT'S NO WITHDRAWAL CLAUSE TO 15 (OR 20) YEARS, THE GAP IS STILL A WIDE ONE, BUT THE FIRST STEP WAS OBVIOUSLY THE MOST DIFFICULT ONE FOR THE WHITE HOUSE, AND IT HAS BEEN TAKEN. AS RUMOURS OF THIS HAVE GOT ABOUT, ITS SIGNIFICANCE HAS NOT BEEN

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LOST ON THE FAR RIGHT AND THE SDI IDEOLOGUES SEMI-COLON AND THEIR PROTESTS (EG IN THE PRESS) HAVE BEEN VOCIFEROUS. THEIR PRINCIPAL CURRENT LINE IS THAT CONGRESS WILL NOT SUPPORT SDI FUNDING UNLESS DEVELOPMENT AND TESTING, AT LEAST OF CERTAIN KEY COMPONENTS, IS SEEN TO BE GOING AHEAD: WITHOUT CIRCUSES THEY THREATEN NO BREAD. THIS HAS PRODUCED A NOTABLE SWITCH OF ARGUMENT BY THE QUOTE HIGH FRONTIER UNQUOTE GROUP: WHEREAS IN THE PAST THEY ARGUED THAT TERMINAL DEFENCE (OF US STRATEGIC SYSTEMS) WAS NOT THE OBJECT OF THE EXERCISE, AND THAT ANYTHING SHORT OF A GENUINE POPULATION DEFENCE (INVOLVING 3 OR 4 LAYERS) WOULD BE INADEQUATE, THEIR PRESSURE FOR EARLY DEMONSTRATIONS NOW DRIVES THEM TO ARGUE FOR TERMINAL DEFENCE FIRST. REACTIONS FROM THE WHITE HOUSE TEAM (STILL IN CALIFORNIA) HAVE SO FAR BEEN MINIMAL, BUT NSC AND STATE CONTACTS SEEM CONFIDENT THAT THE PRESIDENT WILL NOT BACK DOWN FROM THE POSITION SET OUT IN HIS JULY MESSAGE.

4. SECONDLY, THE PRESIDENT'S WILLINGNESS, SIGNALLED IN THE JULY MESSAGE, TO ENVISAGE STRATEGIC OFFENSIVE REDUCTIONS OF LESS THAN 50 PER CENT HAS ALLOWED INTER-AGENCY WORK TO START ON A REFINEMENT OF THE US NOVEMBER 1985 START PROPOSALS WHICH MIGHT GO SOME WAY TO BRIDGE THE GAP TO THE SOVIET JUNE PROPOSALS. THE RUSSIANS THEN SUGGESTED THAT, IN EXCHANGE FOR EXTENSION OF THE ABMT WITHDRAWAL PERIOD, AND PERHAPS ALSO (THE RUSSIANS WERE AMBIGUOUS ON THIS) THE CLARIFICATION OF CERTAIN ABMT TERMINOLOGY (IN EFFECT CODIFYING THE "RESTRICTIVE" INTERPRETATION) THEY WOULD BE PREPARED TO SETTLE FOR INTERIM STRATEGIC OFFENSIVE SYSTEM REDUCTIONS OF SOME 30 PER CENT. INTER-AGENCY WORK HERE IN AUGUST, PUSHED AHEAD BY THE US GENEVA TEAM, AND PARTICULARLY BY LEHMAN, HAS NOW PRODUCED THE TENTATIVE DRAFT PROPOSAL WHICH LEAKED TO THE NEW YORK TIMES ON 31 AUGUST, IE THAT BOTH SIDES SHOULD ACCEPT A CEILING ON WARHEADS OF 7500 (CF 6,000 US/NOVEMBER, AND 8,000 SOVIET/JUNE, PROPOSALS) INCORPORATING SUB-CEILINGS OF 5,500 ON BALLISTIC MISSILE WARHEADS AND 2,000 ON ALCMS (CF 4,500 AND 1,500 IN THE US NOVEMBER PROPOSALS). THERE WOULD ALSO BE A CEILING OF 3,300 ON ICBM RE-ENTRY VEHICLES (CF 3,000 IN US/NOVEMBER, AND 4,800 IN SOVIET/JUNE, PROPOSALS), AND A SUB-CEILING OF 1,650 RVS FOR MISSILES DEEMED TO BY CARRYING MORE THAN 6 RVS. THE LATTER IS A NEW CONCEPT DESIGNED TO CONSTRAIN THE SOVIET HEAVY ICBM FORCE, AND AT FIRST SIGHT LOOKS UNLIKELY TO BE NEGOTIABLE, FOR IT WOULD IMPINGE DIRECTLY ON SS 13/24 DEPLOYMENTS.

5. ALTHOUGH THE NYT LEAK GOT THE NUMBERS IN THE DRAFT PROPOSAL RIGHT, IT GOT ITS STATUS WRONG. FIRST, IT HAS SO FAR NOT BEEN COLLECTIVELY CONSIDERED AT ABOVE WORKING LEVEL (SHULTZ AND WEINBERGER TOO ARE STILL AWAY, AND NITZE AND PERLE WERE NOT INVOLVED). SECONDLY, IT HAS NOT BEEN FULLY AGREED, EVEN AT WORKING LEVEL, BY ALL THE AGENCIES: OSD STILL DISLIKE (A) THE IDEA OF ACCEPTING SDI CONSTRAINTS, AND (B) GOING FOR REDUCTIONS OF LESS THAN 50 PER CENT AS THEIR COUNTERPART. OSD ALSO WORRY THAT AGREEMENT TO TABLE IN GENEVA COUNTER-PROPOSALS ALONG THE LINES NOW ENVISAGED WOULD PUT THE ADMINISTRATION ON A SLIPPERY SLOPE LEADING TO SUBSTANTIAL SUBSEQUENT WATERING-DOWN.

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6. IT SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT THESE NEW IDEAS WILL RECEIVE SUFFICIENTLY BROAD AND HIGH LEVEL APPROVAL TO ALLOW NITZE AND CO TO DO MORE THAN HINT AT THEM IN DISCUSSION WITH THE RUSSIANS THIS WEEK. THE INTER-AGENCY CRUNCH IS MORE LIKELY TO COME SHORTLY BEFORE THE SHEVARDNADZE VISIT. YOUR DISCUSSIONS WITH SHULTZ AND WEINBERGER ON 9 SEPTEMBER WILL THEREFORE BE VERY TIMELY. WHILE REACTIONS FROM THE NON-ADMINISTRATION ARMS CONTROL ESTABLISHMENT TO THE NYT LEAK HAVE BEEN MIXED (WITH SOME CRITICISM FROM EG THE ARMS CONTROL ASSOCIATION ON THE GROUNDS THAT THE LIMITS ARE DEVISED TO BITE ON SYSTEMS WHERE THE RUSSIANS HAVE THE EDGE, BUT NOT ON THOSE WHERE THE AMERICANS LEAD) THE INCIPIENT US MOVEMENT WHICH THEY REPRESENT SEEMS TO US TO DESERVE ENCOURAGEMENT, PRECISELY BECAUSE OSD'S SLIPPERY SLOPE WORRY SEEMS WELL JUSTIFIED. IF THE PRESIDENT WERE TO AGREE TO A SEPTEMBER MOVE ON OFFENSIVE SYSTEMS ALONG THE LEHMAN LINES, WHILE MAINTAINING HIS JULY WILLINGNESS TO DELAY DEFENSIVE DEPLOYMENTS, THE CHANCES OF AN EVENTUAL DEAL IN GENEVA WOULD HAVE INCREASED.

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